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Kishore Rao
Director
World Heritage Centre
UNESCO
7 Place de Fontenoy
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France

31 January, 2014

Dear Kishore

**HENDERSON ISLAND (UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND)
(N 487)**

In accordance with Decision of the 36th session of the World Heritage Committee, I am submitting the state of conservation report for Henderson Island. I have used the format stipulated as far as is possible.

1. Response from the State Party to the World Heritage Committee's Decision, paragraph by paragraph

Decision: 36 COM 7B.26

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC-12/36.COM/7B,*
2. *Recalling Decision 34 COM 7B.27, adopted at its 34th session (Brasilia, 2010),*
3. *Welcomes the progress made by the State Party in the implementation of the rat eradication programme, and the reported preliminary results indicating the success of the eradication operation with minimal negative impacts on non-target species;*

Between August and November 2011, the Pitcairn Islands Government and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, undertook a rat eradication operation on Henderson Island. Rats have had a significant impact on the island's bird population, drastically reducing the number of petrels.

Initial assessments suggested that the rat eradication programme had been successful but during March 2012 a member of a National Geographic expedition to the Pitcairn Islands observed and



filmed a rat on Henderson Island. The RSPB deployed a team to Henderson in May 2012 and confirmed that rats were indeed still present. Genetic analysis has confirmed that rats survived the poisoning and it is not necessary to postulate new introductions to explain their continued presence.

The RSPB commissioned three independent reviews of the eradication programme which confirmed that the programme followed all international best practice. The reviews suggest that the failure of the rat eradication programme was due to unfavourable weather conditions. The work was scheduled to take place during an expected prolonged dry weather period which provides ideal conditions to undertake the eradication through poisoning, the lack of natural food supplies improving bait uptake. Unseasonable wet weather at the time of the operation resulted in plentiful flowering and fruiting plants, and breeding birds, which increased alternative food sources. It is believed that this may have resulted in not all rats switching to the bait pellets.

The attempt to eradicate rats from Henderson, although unsuccessful, demonstrated the benefits that rat eradication would bring to Henderson Island. The eradication attempt has significantly reduced the rat population in the short term with the immediate effect that Murphy's petrel chicks successfully fledged on Henderson, probably for the first time in centuries, and the Henderson reed-warbler population increased five-fold in the period after the eradication attempt.

Additional fieldwork, completed in 2013, was undertaken to assess susceptibility of the rat population to poison and to undertake food preference trials. The results indicate that the Henderson rat population is highly susceptible to poisoning. Rat tracking was also undertaken to establish movement patterns.

An extended fieldwork programme is scheduled for 2015 to undertake additional tracking and also to undertake baseline surveys of non-bird (invertebrate) populations.

4. Urges the State Party, in close cooperation with the Pitcairn authorities and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, to rapidly finalize biosecurity assessments and the strengthening of biosecurity measures, and to establish a permanent Ranger Post at the property as soon as possible, in order to prevent the (re-)introduction of rats or other invasive species through uncontrolled visitation;

Biosecurity measures are under review and new legislation is being prepared, designed to protect the entire Pitcairn Group, with the intention of enacting this during 2014. Biosecurity training will be provided in late 2014 to support enforcement of the new legislation. There are no current plans to employ a dedicated Ranger; the prevailing view is that such a role would be contrary to the biosecurity policy of minimizing visits to Henderson Island. A Pitcairn rat eradication feasibility study is also underway as part of the biosecurity planning for the island group as a whole.

*5. Requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2014**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property, the final result of the rat eradication programme, and the progress achieved in the establishment of a permanent Ranger Post.*

This constitutes the requested report.

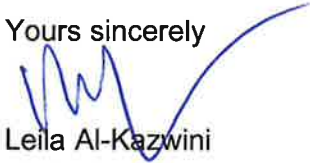
2. **Other current conservation issues identified by the State Party**

No further conservation issues have been identified

3. **In conformity with paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*, please describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) within the protected area (core zone and buffer zone and/or corridors) that might be envisaged.**

No proposals are under consideration

Yours sincerely



Leila Al-Kazwini

Enclosures:

Cc HE Matthew Sudders, UK Permanent Delegate to UNESCO
UK National Commission for UNESCO
Joint Nature Conservation Committee
English Heritage

